

# PARTICIPATION FOR PEACE

A study of  
Inter-Ethnic and  
Inter-Religious  
Perception in Fiji

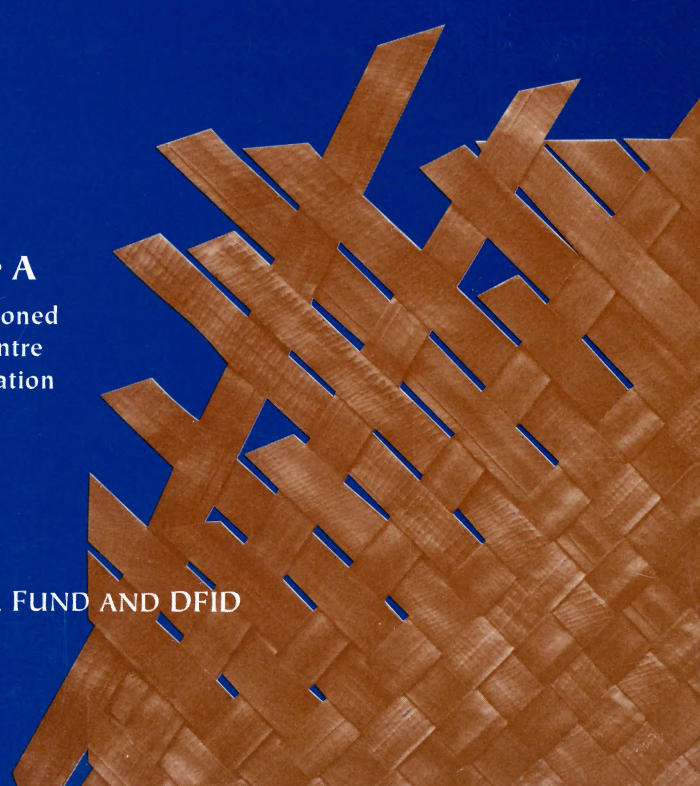
STEVEN RATUVA



E·C·R·E·A

Research Commissioned  
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and Advocacy

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*For more details about this research please contact*

ECUMENICAL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY (ECREA)  
GPO Box 15473, Suva, Fiji Islands. Phone (679) 3307 588 • Fax: (679) 3311248 • Email: [info@ecrea.org.fj](mailto:info@ecrea.org.fj)

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# Executive Summary

1. This peace research was a pilot study on inter-cultural and inter-religious perception amongst various ethnic groups in Fiji, aimed at gauging how people of different ethnic groups viewed the cultures and religions of others. This was part of the broader process of peace building being undertaken by the Ecumenical Centre for Research Education and Advocacy (ECREA).
2. Ethnic perception provides a crucial component of how people relate to each other in a pluralistic society. Ethnic and cultural perceptions shape attitudes towards other communities and could form the ideological basis for political mobilisation. Some ethnic and cultural perceptions may be based on experienced social reality but some may be purely ideological and based on stereotypes and ethnic assumptions reproduced over time.
3. Understanding inter-communal perceptions is important for community and national peace building because it informs us of complex underlying sentiments and views which could be moulded and reshaped to forge better human relations.
4. Because the peace research required an in-depth and subjective insight into peoples thinking, a qualitative methodology had to be used. Thus the methodology used was the Participatory Peace Appraisal (PPA) technique. The PPA methodology is different from other conventional research methods because it introduces collective participation, empowerment and democratisation to the participants. The research process itself is as important as the results because it helps to impart and reproduce important peace building values to the participants. The research process itself becomes a component of peace education and peace building.
5. Since this was a pilot project, the sample was limited to 200 in the Suva area. Of these, 55% were Indigenous Fijians; 40% were Indo-Fijians and 5% were from other minorities.
6. People's perceptions are shaped and reproduced by various socio-economic, cultural and political values, by modes of interactions and by institutions ranging from primary socialization in the family to membership of political parties. These forces need to be identified and analysed to provide the basis for our understanding of the origin of particular forms of perceptions. For peace building in Fiji, reshaping these forces and associated perceptions are of utmost importance.
7. It was evident from the findings that in a multi-ethnic pluralistic society, people's perceptions of their own culture and symbols are very strong and complex, because they see their culture as basic to their sense of identity. Any attempt at peace building must necessarily involve a systematic and sensitive approach to understanding the complex aspects of identity.



8. Contrary to general assumptions, people's perceptions, as shown by the participants, are not entirely driven by communal stereotypes but by complex factors, which enable them to see different levels of cultural expressions in others. For instance, in some contexts, perceptions of other ethnic groups may be based on negative communal stereotypes but in other contexts, they may be based on positive and affirmative views.
9. There is a general desire for national reconciliation and harmony but the difficulty has to do with how this can be achieved. There are two levels of identity, which need to be reconciled: on one hand is the unifying national identity and on the other hand is communal identity. The two need to co-exist and enrich each other in a mutually engaging way to ensure harmonious existence for both. There is a general feeling that one must not subsume the other.
10. The findings of this research provide the basis for further research at the national level. The major recommendation of this report, as part of the broader national peace building effort, is for a more comprehensive peace research, using the PPA methodology to be carried out. This would expand the limited findings of this research at the national level.



# Part I

## 1.0 Contextualising the Study

### 1.1 Overview of Research

This pilot research exercise provides a sociological exploration of the nature of inter-ethnic, inter-cultural and inter-religious perceptions amongst the people at large in Fiji, using a limited sample of 200. Most of the literature and other accounts of ethnic conflict in Fiji have been based on dominant assumptions and in some cases, observed surface socio-political processes and little, if any, have been based on understanding the underlying perceptions of ordinary people. Furthermore, the political ideas propagated in the media largely reflect the dominant political discourses, which assume that the different ethnic groups in Fiji, are naturally different and in opposition, therefore ethnic conflict is a natural and inevitable consequence. Such an assumption has been reproduced and, in fact, institutionalised in our constitutions, political system, political culture and even in our daily social interaction.

However, this assumption helps to mystify reality and divert people's attention away from the inherent potential for peace building within our individual selves and within our different cultures.<sup>1</sup> It undermines the individual and collective potential for inter-communal and inter-ethnic bridge building and discourages/prevents the creation of a common vision for a common national identity and consciousness.

As an alternative approach, this paper argues that instead of simply relying on dominant political and cultural assumptions, there is a need to explore the deeper inter-ethnic and inter-cultural perceptions of people. The discourses of ordinary people in Fiji have been largely sub-alternated and marginalised but there is a need to provide a forum for them to be heard and used as a basis for peace building. This research attempts to examine some of the views of citizens at large in relation to inter-ethnic, inter-cultural and inter-religious relations.

The research, which is based on the Participatory Peace Appraisal (PPA) technique, is not only "fact finding" in nature, through its participatory, empowerment and collective strategies, it is also an inherent part of the broader community peace building. Therefore, through PPA, research and peace building become symbiotically part of each other.

The findings of this research will be the basis for further dialogue and discussions as part of the nationwide peace building project of the Ecumenical Centre for Research Education and Advocacy (ECEA).

It is generally assumed that textbook peace building approaches, used elsewhere can be easily transplanted to the local socio-cultural and political milieu. While there are universally applicable principles relating to peace building throughout the world, it is important to note that the specific socio-cultural and historical conditions of different societies shape particular modes of behaviour and perception, which reflect specific conditions. For this reason, understanding the perceptions of people in the local context is of utmost necessity.

The foci of the questions in the research largely revolve around perceptions on culture and religion. These two factors are of fundamental importance in terms of understanding political relations in

1 See for instance Premdas (1995)



Fiji because more often than not, political and ethnic tension in Fiji involves the perception of culture and religion in various complex ways. Firstly, culture and religion can be deployed as a basis for identification, a means by which identities are defined and reproduced. Secondly, they can be deployed as instruments for justification, to justify the occurrence or continuation of conflict. Thirdly, they can be instruments for political mobilisation and legitimisation to promote certain politically defined interests and "causes", such as occurred during the nationalist coup of 19 May 2000.

## 1.2 Rationale of Research

The coup of May 2000 helped catalyse the wave of ethnic distrust and tension, which swept our country. The challenge today is how to rebuild the shattered relationships and scarred hopes of the people of this country who have suffered immensely as a result of the coup. One of the answers lies in understanding the perceptions of people and in encouraging dialogue as a means of consensus building towards bridging the cultural and religious gaps, which continue to divide the people. The role of civil society is of utmost importance in this connection. While politics has created conditions for ethnic polarisation and fragmentation, civil society still remains a durable and resilient bastion for social reconstruction and harmony.

To foster peace, it is of fundamental importance to have an insight into people's perceptions about each other. Thus this research is an attempt to gauge and examine people's perceptions of each other's culture and religion and the implications of these for peace building.

## 1.3 Aims of Research

The specific aims of the research are as follows:

- To identify and analyse some of the historical and socio-cultural factors which have shaped ethnic relations and politics in Fiji;
- To examine the development of diverse ethnic identities and how they relate to each other;
- To collect and analyse people's perceptions of other cultures and religions;
- To examine some factors which shape people's perceptions of other cultures;
- To gauge differences in views on culture and religion and to identify areas of consensus;
- To build up inter-communal understanding and confidence through collective dialogue using the PPA technique;
- To foster a spirit of cooperation and empowerment between the participants through discussion of common problems and solutions as the basis for peace building.

## 1.4 A Note on Terminology

A number of words are deliberately used to appropriately reflect their significance in the context of the research philosophy. These are noted below.

Participants/Discussants: The terms participants and discussants in the context of this research refer to the "respondents" or "interviewees", terms widely used in conventional research. The problem with these terms (respondents and interviewees) is that they do not appropriately capture the process of collective discussion and dialogue within the focus groups. The terms participants and discussants capture the PPA process quite well, as they depict the relationship



in the research as active and empowering. The terms “respondents” and “interviewees” tend to suggest a passive and disempowering relationship.

**Indigenous Fijians:** This term is used instead of “Fijian”, “ethnic Fijian”, or “native Fijian” three widely used concepts in contemporary literature on Fiji. The term “Fijian” and Fiji Islander are inter-changeably used to refer to all ethnic groups in Fiji. The term “ethnic Fijian” is also problematic because all ethnic groups are “ethnic” anyway. If we talk about “ethnic Fijian” then we might as well talk about “ethnic Indian” etc., but this will only serve to worsen the conceptual confusion. The term “native” (as in native Fijian) has a colonial racist connotation (as “savage” or “uncivilized”, etc.) attached to it, so it is sociologically, morally and politically unacceptable. The term “indigenous” may not be a perfect one, but at least it makes a historical distinction between the original settlers and later arrivals. It is also the closest ethnic label to the term *Taukei*, used by indigenous Fijians to refer to themselves.

**Indo-Fijian:** This term is used to refer to those of Indian ancestry. The term acknowledges that they are also “Fijian”. The widely used term, “Indian” denies any historical or cultural association with Fiji. In fact the term “Indian” suggests that Indo-Fijians are still Indian nationals.

**Other minorities:** The term “Others” is probably the most problematic since there are a number of minority groups (13 altogether) included. The term “other minorities”, instead of “Others” is used in this research because it recognises the existence of various diverse cultural identities within the group. The term “Others” wrongly assumes a homogenous and common identity. It is too patronising, imposing and restrictive. The details are discussed in subsection 3.2.3 of Part 3.

The use of ethnic labels has always been contentious in Fiji, due to the politically volatile nature of ethnicity. As we move towards national peace building, good governance and democratisation, it is important to “label” people with terms, which are empowering and which create a positive feeling, rather than to use labels, which cast communities in a culturally and historically negative light. Labelling is an important aspect of inter-ethnic perception and definition as well as a vital component of defining communal boundaries and identity, as we will see in Part 3.

## 1.5 Structure of Paper

This paper is divided into the following parts:

- Part 1 provides an overview of the research and an outline of the rationale and aims of the research.
- Part 2 provides a detailed discussion of the methodology used in the research process. It details the logistical and theoretical components of the Participatory Peace Appraisal Methodology (PPA) used in this research.
- Part 3 contextualizes the study by exploring in some depth some of the historical and socio-cultural dynamics in Fiji, which helped shape ethnic relations and conflict.
- Part 4 provides a detailed analysis of the discussants' responses.
- Part 5 is a summary of the major findings, based on the analysis of the responses in Part 4.
- Part 6 concludes the paper and also presents some recommendations for follow up activities and future research.



## Part 2

### 1.0 Research Methodology

#### 2.1 Location and Approach

The research involved both library survey and empirical fieldwork in the Suva City area. Since this is a pilot study, the sample was limited to 200 people living within the Suva City area. Of the total sample of 200, 55% were Indigenous Fijians, 40% Indo-Fijians and 5% belonged to other ethnic groups. The sample more or less paralleled (although not very precisely) the national population breakdown, as a way of ensuring a representative range of views. For details of the sample breakdown, see Section 2.5 of Part 2. The participatory method used in the research is relatively new, and this was the first time it had been used in the area of peace research in Fiji. The details of the research method are discussed below.

#### 2.2 Qualitative Approach: The Participatory Peace Appraisal Method (PPA)

At the theoretical level the research attempts to capture the subjective perceptions of people about their culture. It seeks to uncover a deeper level of understanding of cultural epistemology (knowledge of culture) and cultural ontology (existence of culture).

It is for this reason that a research method, which adequately facilitated the research process, needed to be used. Thus, instead of the usual questionnaire-based interviews, the methodology used in this research was the Participatory Peace Appraisal (PPA), based on the increasingly popular Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) technique, developed at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, UK<sup>1</sup>. The PPA technique is fashioned specifically for peace research.

In the PPA technique, "researchers" act as facilitators in a collective discursive situation. It has the following characteristics:

- **Participatory:** The technique is first of all participatory in the sense that the discussants themselves directly participate in shaping the course of the discussion and in determining the final solutions to their own problems. This is different from the usual questionnaire type approach, which under the guise of "objectivity", is very extractive and disempowering. It is extractive in the sense that the researchers are only interested in taking out information using very narrow and mechanistic questionnaires. This information is then quantified and interpreted at will by the researchers. The interviewees merely serve as passive sources of information and objects of research legitimisation. They have no power over the interpretation of their views nor any say in how the research results are going to be used. This constitutes a situation of disempowerment. The PPA technique overcomes this problem by facilitating collective dialogue. The process of collective dialogue itself is an appropriate mechanism for community peace building. The process of collective discussion, sharing strategies, ideas and solutions provides the means of establishing community trust and cohesion. The participatory process itself is a mechanism for peace building and an end in itself.

In this research, participation was limited to the active exchange of views, and to critical evaluation of one another's opinions in order to arrive at an acceptable consensus. Collective discussion on ethnic and cultural perceptions ensured a sense of common identification, trust and confidence in each other. The questions were posed to the discussants, and they were to

<sup>1</sup> See Chambers (1994). The PRA method has recently been used by governments, universities and international institutions such as the World Bank as a means of understanding complex social processes.



respond to the questions in their own ways. Individual responses were collectively analysed and the strengths and weaknesses determined. In the process, ideas were being synthesised into a general consensus. Sharing of ideas, inner feelings and experiences was a form of collective participation, which ensured peace building through consensus. Collective consensus, which the research aimed to achieve amongst the focus groups, ensured collective empowerment. Most of the focus groups were able to achieve consensus.

- Empowerment: The participatory nature of the approach makes it empowering for the discussants. This is important for peace research such as this where the search for areas of political and ideological convergence and solutions become the responsibility of the respondents themselves, instead of being left to the "expert" researcher from "outside" to decide. The people themselves own the collective research process and the knowledge it creates. Knowledge is power and power in the hands of the people is important in community building. Being able to freely express one's views and to offer solutions to collective problems builds confidence. The discussants themselves are the "experts", not the outside researchers, and this constitutes a vital aspect of the empowerment process.

The discussants agreed that the process had given them a sense of self-assurance and confidence. They found the fact their opinions of other ethnic groups were appreciated by those groups encouraging. Many said that the collective appraisal enabled them to give and accept criticism while maintaining a degree of mutuality. It was also pointed out that arriving at a consensus, despite initial differences, created a sense of self-confidence individually, and a sense of group strength and empowerment, collectively.

- Collective: The PPA is collective in the sense that it involves sharing experiences and thoughts in an open and dynamic way between people with different ideas. In the process, a common area of convergence is identified and "nurtured". The area of convergence becomes the basis for building a consensus. Consensus is arrived at through a dynamic discursive exchange, and people who may have differing views initially will begin to see other people's logic and at the same time see the inadequacies in their own views.

Many discussants felt that the collective approach in the research gave them a sense of unity and moral bond with others.

The participatory and collective nature of the approach has a number of advantages over conventional methodologies. For peace research such as this, the process of research itself becomes a means of engaging individuals to see and be part of the democratisation process of collective decision making. Agreeing on a common line of reasoning/way of thinking helps participants realize how much more they may have in common and how these shared ideas can be mobilised for collective peace building. In other words, the people themselves respond in ways which are based on consensual perceptions and feelings, and this could be the basis for important peace initiatives on a broader scale.

Conventional research methodology is based on positivism- that is it is based largely on taking the "visible" appearance as truth without understanding the underlying ideas and processes. The use of questionnaire-type interviews in conventional research is usually mechanistic, extractive and undemocratic. Individual opinions are gathered, tabulated, quantified and interpreted in isolation. Information is squeezed out without due regard to the significance of the respondent's interpretation. Conventional research is often undemocratic because it fails to incorporate the collective participation of people in the process of information gathering and decision making.

The PPA technique provides an appropriate methodological alternative in as far as community and peace building is concerned.



### 2.3 About the Questionnaires

The questionnaires were structured on the basis of what is known as the Field Matrix Schema (FMS). However, the matrix system used was a simplified version. The collective responses were recorded in the simple matrix provided.

Appendix 1 is a sample of the FMS questionnaires. The three columns refer to three variables: firstly, the Main Collective Response (MCR); secondly, Other Views (OV); and thirdly, Significant Observations (SO).

The MCR column refers to the result of the collective appraisal from the discussants. People may have divergent views in the beginning, but after exchange of views, they would be able to see a common collective logic and this consensus would be recorded by the facilitator. The OV column refers to views, which are different from the collective logic of the discussants. However, sometimes consensus can be achieved from the beginning without any need for OV. In the SO column the facilitator can note down observations about the discussants behaviour. This would be in relation to whether the atmosphere was friendly or tense; whether there was straight consensus or strong divergence of views, etc.

### 2.4 Logistics of Focus Group Discussions

The approach involved the facilitator sitting with a group of people in a circle and conducting discussions based on the questions in the questionnaires (See Instructions for Facilitators in Appendix 2). The groups ranged from 5 to 10 participants and the idea was to ensure that everyone had a chance to express his or her views as freely as possible. The facilitators, four in total, had to sit as part of the circle and act not as the autocratic interviewers, as in conventional interviews, but simply as facilitators in providing a democratic environment in which the discussants could express their views.

The facilitators were to note down views, which were arrived at through consensus, or majority agreement. Divergent views were also noted down. The facilitators, all of whom were University of the South Pacific students, went through a training session conducted by the Chief Researcher, and in addition there was constant consultation and strict coordination between the Chief Researcher and the facilitators.

### 2.5 Sample and Social Profile of Participants

Of the sample of 200 discussants, there were 44 focus groups involved in the research. Each of the four facilitators handles approximately 11 focus groups. Each focus group consisted of approximately 5-10 discussants from different parts of Suva. The details of ethnic, religious, age and gender distribution are shown in the tables below.

TABLE 2.1: BREAKDOWN OF SAMPLE IN TERMS OF ETHNICITY

Ethnicity	Fijian	Indo-Fijian	Others	Total
Number	110	80	10	200
Percentage	55	40	5	100

Table 2.1 shows that of the total of 200 discussants, there were 110 Indigenous Fijians (55%), 80 Indo-Fijians (40%) and 10 (5%) from other ethnic groups. This breakdown roughly approximates the national population distribution. This was to make sure that there was a degree of "national representativeness" in the sample, although a rather small one in the context of the national population.



TABLE 2.2: BREAKDOWN OF SAMPLE IN TERMS OF RELIGION

Religion	Christians	Hindus	Muslims	Other	Total
Number	120	45	20	15	200
Percentage	60	22.5	10	7.5	100

Table 2.2 shows the breakdown in relation to religion. There were 120 (60%) Christians of different denominations, 45 (22.5%) Hindus, 20 (10%) Muslims and 15 (7.5%) belonging to various other religious groups.

TABLE 2.3: BREAKDOWN OF SAMPLE IN TERMS OF AGE GROUP

Age Gr.	-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-	Total
Number	0	30	40	46	60	24	200
Percentage	0	15	20	23	30	12	100

Table 2.3 shows the breakdown according to age groups. Altogether there were 6 different age groups. There was no participants below the age of 10 (-10), while there were 30 (15%) for the 11-20 age group and 40 (20%) for the 21-30 age group. At the upper end of the age spectrum, there were 60 (30%) for the 41-50 age group and 24 (12%) for the 51 and above age group.

TABLE 2.4 BREAKDOWN OF SAMPLE IN TERMS OF GENDER

Gender	Male	Female	Total
Number	96	104	200
Percentage	48	52	100

The breakdown for gender in Table 2.4 show that, of the sample of 200, there were 104 females and 96 males.

## 2.6 Basis of Sample Breakdown

The sample breakdown above (ethnicity, religion, gender and age) was meant to provide some basis on which, differences in perception were to be identified. Results showed that only ethnicity and religion had some significance, but not sufficiently to have a fundamental bearing on the results of the consensus. Wherever there were divergent views on the basis of ethnicity or even religion, these were noted down (see Part 3).

One of the reasons why the differences in ethnicity, religion, gender and age did not have a great deal of significance in terms of determining the results of the research was that the focus groups were based on achieving consensus. Thus in a situation of consensus, individual views were subsumed into the collective decision.

Before the results of the research are discussed in Part 4, a broad historical and socio-cultural background of Fiji is presented in Part 3 to provide a framework for later discussions regarding ethnic perceptions.



## Part 3

### 3.0 Fiji: A Historical and Ethno-Cultural Background

#### 3.1 Brief Overview

Fiji was under British rule for 96 years and became independent on October 10, 1970. The colonial and post-colonial history was shaped by complex socio-economic, political and ethnic factors. Inter and intra-ethnic relations, underpinned by occasional tension and compromises have featured prominently. The tension has been heightened by the separate political demands of the two major ethnic groups, the Indigenous Fijians and the Indo-Fijians, and the perceived inequalities between them.

The demands of Indo-Fijians were largely based on their need to be given more political rights through equal representation. Indigenous Fijians on the other hand, feared domination by Indo-Fijians and, as a result, clamoured for communal protection. This was taking place in the context of dramatic demographic shift, which saw the Indigenous Fijian population being over taken numerically by the Indo-Fijians in the 1940s. Table 3.1 shows the ethnic demographic pattern from 1881 to 1996.

TABLE 3.1: POPULATION BY ETHNIC ORIGIN FROM 1881 TO 1996.<sup>1</sup>

Ethnicity	1881	1901	1921	1946	1956	1966	1976	1986	1996
Chinese	+	+	910	2,874	4,155	5,149	4,652	4,784	4,939
European	2,671	2,459	3,878	4,594	6,402	6,590	4,929	4,196	3,103
Fijian	114,748	94,397	84,475	118,070	148,134	202,176	259,932	329,305	393,575
Indian	588	17,105	60,634	120,414	169,403	240,960	292,896	348,702	338,818
Part-Euro.	771	1,516	2,781	6,142	7,810	9,687	10,276	10,297	11,685
Rotuman	2,452	2,230	2,235	3,313	4,422	5,797	7,291	8,652	9,727
Pacific Is	6,100	1,950	1,564	3,717	5,320	6,095	6,822	8,627	10,463
Other	156	467	789	514	91	273	1,270	810	2,767
Total	127,486	120,124	157,266	259,638	345,737	476,727	588,068	715,375	775,077

Source: 1996 Census of Fiji, Bureau of Statistics: 29.

The demographic pattern shown on the table made political and cultural relations complex. Although a country with a small population, Fiji's politics has been complicated by its diverse ethnic make up. These complexities need to be understood both in sociological and historical contexts to fully understand the forces which shape ethnic relations in contemporary Fiji.

#### 3.2 Construction of Communal Identities

Identity derives from the following: various forms of collective symbolism (such as religion and language), shared experience, shared values etc. A group uses these as a basis for the construction of its cultural boundary. Cultural identity therefore, can be a relatively loose and imprecise concept, which has the potential to change over time.<sup>2</sup> Identities may be bolstered by one's claim to some grand immemorial past existence through direct ancestry or by means of other relatively recent social constructions such as flags, anthems etc.

<sup>1</sup> Note that the figures for the 1891, 1911 and 1936 Census are not included.

<sup>2</sup> See Jenkins (1997) for a detailed anthropological discussion.



Usually, in multi-ethnic societies, ethnic groups in political contention continue to reinvent their 'identities' to bolster their interests and legitimise their claims. Moreover, ethnic identity helps define the boundary of an ethnic group and it may be deployed as a tool for ethno-nationalist demands and political mobilisation. Identities exist at two levels. Firstly, is the level of cultural spontaneity, that is how people define themselves in relation to others in the context of everyday social and cultural engagement; and secondly, the level of formal political organisation and mobilisation, where identity becomes the basis for state policies, political party structure, religious groupings etc.

Identities can either be internally defined (defined by the group itself) or externally defined (defined and some times imposed by others), thus a dual, in fact symbiotic, process of internalisation and externalisation of identity continuously takes place. These two modes of definition can be either antagonistic or mutual, depending on the circumstances.

It is important to note that differences in identity do not necessarily cause political conflict, but the way in which these differences are deployed to justify particular demands and interests may do so. The situation becomes much more complex when identity becomes the basis for political mobilisation. In Fiji, the development of separate and 'antagonistic' identities of Indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians and their link to communal politics, was part of a deliberate strategy under the Native Policy of the British colonial state.

The demographic pattern shown on the table made political and cultural relations complex. Although a country with a small population, Fiji's politics has been complicated by its diverse ethnic make up. These complexities need to be understood both in sociological and historical contexts to fully understand the dynamics and forces which shape ethnic relations in contemporary Fiji.

### 3.2.1 The Evolution of the Indigenous Fijian Identity

One of the major undertakings of the first Governor of Fiji, Sir Arthur Gordon in 1876, two years after Fiji was ceded to Britain, was the establishment of two major processes. First was the creation of a unified political system through the incorporation of independent chiefdoms into a centralised system referred to as the Native Administration. This was done in order to bring together the autonomous socio-cultural and political entities, which characterised Fiji under one centralised administration. As part of this process chiefs became the unquestioned source of authority through the newly created Great Council of Chiefs sanctioned by the new British laws. A powerful hierarchy of *chieftocrats* (traditional chiefs who also served as state bureaucrats) was created at the national, provincial, district and village levels. Secondly, the different landowning and tenure systems were unified under a single model throughout the colony. This led to the reinvention and codification of a *matagali*-based landowning system, which came to be accepted by Fijians as immemorial.<sup>3</sup>

The Native Policy led to dramatic socio-cultural transformations within the Fijian community, which are still evident today. Firstly, it helped to construct a homogeneous collective identity on a national scale, as opposed to simply localised kinship identification. The new socio-cultural formation under the Fijian Administration created new conditions for re-identification as a *Taukei* in relation to the *Vulagis* (visitors). This "homogeneous" identity later became institutionalised and in fact crystallised in such institutions as the Fijian Affairs Board (FAB), Ministry of Fijian Affairs (MFA), Native Land Trust Board (NLTB), *Vola ni Kawa Bula*<sup>4</sup> and even the 1970 and 1990

3 See France (1969).

4 The *Vola ni Kawa Bula* refers to the Native Land Commission records pertaining to family lineage and and-ownership. To be officially a 'Fijian', one has to be recorded in the *Vola ni Kawa Bula*.

5 Cultural identification took place at two levels; the local level under chiefly tutelage and at the national level, under the colonial governor, representing the colonial state. Under this arrangement, colonial and chiefly culture became the new cultural arbitrary, imposed as "traditional" and thus legitimate, yet concealing the fact that they were recent social constructions designed to serve the hegemonic interest of colonial pacification. See Norton (1994).



Constitutions. It also became the legitimising vehicle for ethno-nationalist demands<sup>5</sup>, including the coups of 1987 and 2000 which were justified as serving the interest of Indigenous Fijians as a homogenous group.

Secondly, through the separate Fijian Administration, Fijians were locked into a subsistence mode of life, away from any meaningful interaction with Indo-Fijians, either at the everyday or at the political level. This accounted for the development of separate and antagonistic identities and perceptions. To the Indigenous Fijians, over time, being separate from the *Kaidia* (Indian) was seen as a natural condition. The system of separate administration institutionalised ethnic compartmentalisation. It also shaped the Indigenous Fijian's self-perception and identification in the wider Fiji society. Isolated development and minimal inter-ethnic interaction sowed the seed for potentially explosive ethnocentrism and nationalism in the future. Indeed, the same isolationist form of socialisation amongst Indo-Fijians helped to mould Indo-centric views of Indigenous Fijians. Ethnic stereotypes began to be created around this situation of separate development, where Indigenous Fijians were confined to communal subsistence life (and were thus regarded by Indo-Fijians as "lazy"), and Indo-Fijians were involved in laborious cane farming and commerce (and were thus regarded by Indigenous Fijians as "stingy".)

Thirdly, was the consolidation of chiefly hierarchical authority, based on the highly stratified Polynesian system of Eastern Fiji. During pre-colonial times, loyalty to chiefs was not absolute, and many parts of Fiji had relatively autonomous and egalitarian systems. The chiefly system, under the Native Administration, became an unquestioned political and cultural guardian of Indigenous Fijians. Today the reinvented Fijian chiefly system is unified under the *Bose Levu Vakaturaga* (Great Council of Chiefs), which came into existence in 1875.

Fourthly, because the system promoted communal and chiefly power, "consensus" (usually in the form of consent to authority through silence) became an important aspect of political identity. Being confrontational was considered "un-chiefly" and "un-Fijian". On the basis of this, many saw "democratic" representation and oppositional politics as antithetical to chiefly rule. This had a profound impact in moulding Indigenous Fijian political culture in later years, in particular the resistance to democratic change in leadership, that were perceived to be a 'threat' to chiefly authority and the "traditional" system<sup>6</sup>. Examples were the resistance and eventual overthrow of the Bavadra government in May 1987 and the coup in May 2000, which saw the overthrow of Mahendra Chaudhry's Labour-led government. Both of these governments were considered "anti-Fijian" by many.

Fifthly, the Native Policy helped reproduce and crystallise ethnicity as the dominant political and cultural ideology in Fiji. In this way, cultural identity came to be understood largely in relation to ethnic identity. Over the years, ethnicity became the dominant factor, which underscored class, religious and political mobilisations<sup>7</sup>.

Sixthly, because the Native Policy locked Indigenous Fijians into communal village life, under chiefly tutelage, there developed a strong sense of communalistic social and political orientation, which was to have a lasting effect on the Fijian way of thinking. This communal psyche and mode of identification has been a lethal weapon for ethno-nationalist mobilisation in recent years.

Lastly, the Native Policy marginalised Indigenous Fijians into the communal subsistence sector, and this retarded their active participation in mainstream economic development. As a result, they lagged behind in commerce and education<sup>8</sup>. Consequently, Indigenous Fijians, over the years, came to believe that they were of lesser ability and intelligence, compared to Indo-Fijians. Political

6 See Lawson (1991).

7 Premdas (1995).

8 See Spate (1959).



control to maintain paramountcy of Fijian interest and affirmative action, have always been seen by Fijians as a way of making up for this deficit. Grievances, based on Indigenous Fijian economic "backwardness" has always been a feature of nationalist agitation.

Apart from the seven social dynamics discussed above, perhaps one of the most powerful aspects of Indigenous Fijian identity is Christianity. While Christianity was introduced in the 1800s, it has been instrumental in shaping Indigenous Fijian cultural perceptions and norms. At the same time, Indigenous Fijian culture and politics have helped shape some of the doctrines and practices of the churches. This relationship has made Christianity (especially Methodism) an inseparable component of the Fijian socio-cultural milieu. Christianity has provided the ideological base on which various forms of cultural and political practices are justified. The fact that Christianity is the dominant religion, as Table 3.2 shows, means that it can be easily manipulated for political dominance. The table shows that Methodism has remained the largest Christian denomination

TABLE 3.2: RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION BY ETHNICITY, FIJI POPULATION, 1996

	Fijians	Indians	Others	Total
Methodist	261972	5432	13224	280628
Catholic	52163	3520	13637	69320
Other Christians	76245	11767	11522	99534
Hindus	864	262851	458	264173
Muslims	324	53753	246	54323
Other religions/no relig.	2007	1495	3597	7099
TOTAL	393575	338818	42684	775077

Source: Bureau of Statistics (Unpublished 1996 National Census Figures).

The close relationship between ethnicity and religion, as the table shows, continues to be a dominant factor in identity construction. Thus when one talks of Fijian cultural identity, one talks of a complex interplay between colonially constructed cultural symbolism, Christianity and current political concerns which inform and reinforce one another.

Significantly, as shown above, what is generally regarded as a homogeneous Fijian traditional identity has its roots in this relatively recent colonial social formation but it has been widely accepted as primordial and immemorial. Because this collective identity developed in the context of ethnic politics and communal separation, as required by the colonial policy of divide and rule, it became the basis on which political mobilisation took place. Fijian identity was defined by institutions such as the Great Council of Chiefs, Fijian Affairs Board, Native Land Trust Board, *Yasana*, *Mataqali*, *Tokatoka* and *Koro*, and even the church. These various levels of socio-cultural organisations served both as reference points for cultural identification and a means of ethnic mobilisation. They became the basis for defining the concept of *vanua*<sup>9</sup> and the justification for ethno-nationalist mobilisation.

Furthermore, over the years, the changes and diversity within the Fijian community have made it increasingly difficult to talk of a homogeneous identity. The social mobility amongst the educated Fijians has generated dramatic changes in their self-perception. Some no longer define themselves

9 The term *vanua* in this case refers to a collective relationship between extended social groups within the Fijian society. There are other dimensions of the concept, which will be discussed in detail later when we deal with the question of land.



in the context of the formal Fijian institutional identity already described. They perceive themselves in relation to a more globalised context. However, while the growth of the educated Fijian middle class has, to some extent, provided more liberal input into the Fijian community, it has in no way neutralised the deeper communal discourses within the Fijian community itself. In fact, many of these educated elites are products of pro-Fijian affirmative action in education in the past and they feel that it is in their interest to continue with pro-Fijian preferential policies and traditional institutions. For instance, the government's commercial affirmative policies in the 1980s have largely benefited them. These affirmative action policies were justified by the desire for economic equality with Indo-Fijian and by ethno-nationalism. In recent years, the Fijian middle class has taken advantage of Fijian ethno-nationalism to promote its own professional and economic interests.

Furthermore, the continuing political fragmentation and inter-communal tension between the various *vanua*s has increasingly brought into question the notion of Fijian homogeneity. After the attempted putsch in May 2000, the tensions and power struggle between traditional Fijian power blocs was inter-linked with inter ethnic conflict in a complex way.

### 3.2.2 Consolidation of the "Indian" Cultural Identity

The "Indian" identity is problematic because it consists of a wide variety of ethnic and cultural categories. However, the term "Indian" as used today is more of a political rather than a cultural category. In the context of national politics, "Indianess" becomes an assumed homogeneous identity on its own.

Indo-Fijians were brought to Fiji by the British from the late 1800s to the early 1900s to work on sugar plantations. Indo-Fijians were largely confined to sugar plantations where they worked as labourers, while Indigenous Fijians were locked into subsistence mode in the villages. Consequently, the emerging Indian identity was shaped by the rigours of plantation life and the colonial divide and rule policies. This helped to shape a collective Indian identity in relation to Indigenous Fijian and European identities.

The 60,553 Indian labourers who originally arrived between May 1879 and November 1916 consisted of a diverse cross-section of the continental Indian society, as shown in Table 3.2. There were more than 80% Hindus of various castes, 15% Muslims and 0.1% Christians.

TABLE 3.3: EMIGRATION FROM CALCUTTA TO FIJI, 1879-1916. RELIGIONS AND CASTES OF EMIGRANTS (as given in Calcutta emigration reports)

	% to Total (Males)	% to Total (Female)	% to Total (Emigrants)
<b>Hindus</b>			
Brahmins/High Caste	17.0	14.2	16.1
Agriculturists	32.7	28.4	31.3
Artisans	6.9	6.5	6.7
Low Castes	29.3	35.0	31.2
<b>Muslims</b>	14.0	15.8	14.6
<b>Christians</b>	0.1	0.1	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Gillion, 1962: 209.



The harsh and regimented conditions of plantation labour drove Indian immigrants/workers towards a common identification despite their being rigidly separated. In time, this subsumed the class, caste and ethnic heterogeneity of the Indian migrants, and helped create a common bond and identity, which became the psychological force behind their future political demands. Most of the demands were for political representation (targeted at the colonial state itself), and better conditions (targeted at Colonial Sugar Refining Company), which controlled the sugar industry from the 1880s to 1973.<sup>10</sup>

Thus "Indianness" as a communal identity for cultural and political expression evolved from the conditions of plantation life. This is aptly summarised as follows:

The nature and character of their participation in the socio-economic life of Fiji was, therefore, distinctly different to that of the native Fijian. By the end of the indenture system in 1920, some important socio-economic differentiation among Indians had occurred. That this trend continued thereafter, and eventually accelerated, was largely due to the nature and character of the Indian's position and participation in the total productive process. At the socio-political level, the conditions under which he worked had profound effect on his caste affinities, caste practices, and kinship ties. His solidarity in Fiji was, therefore, no longer based on caste or family loyalties but rather on common economic interests, ethnic identity, and perhaps even on the perception of a common foe.<sup>11</sup>

There were other Indo-Fijians (apart from the indentured labourers), such as Indian entrepreneurs, who came to Fiji as free migrants. They set up businesses such as retail shops and credit systems and became relatively wealthy. A significant number of Indians became educated and joined the professional ranks. Increasingly, class division within the Indian ethnic category became more and more pronounced, resulting from education and petite-bourgeois accumulation.<sup>12</sup>

Today, within the Indian community, there is diversity of religious affiliations. The major religious groups are Hindus and Muslims. There are also Sikhs, Buddhists and Christians. Amongst the Christians, there is a small number of Methodists, who constitute what is referred to as the "Indian Circuit".

The notion of "Indian" as a collective identity is more of a political category than a socio-cultural one. It has become durable because of the ethnic nature of Fiji's politics, which continually reproduces it as a permanent category.

### 3.2.3 Minorities: Diverse Categories

The minority groups in Fiji are collectively referred to as "Others" or "General Electors" in politics. There is an inherent contradiction here between firstly, the state imposed political label of "Others" or "General Electors" to refer collectively to those who are neither Indigenous Fijians nor Indo-Fijians, and secondly, the distinctive identity of the various minority ethnic groups concerned.

<sup>10</sup> Indians lived a plantation routine life (away from indigenous Fijians who lived in koros or villages under the paternal "care" of the Native Policy) and came into direct contradiction with the colonial state for their persistent demands for political rights, amongst which was representation to parliament (then called the Legislative Council) (Ali, 1977). Later, eager to neutralise the conflict, which might endanger the economy, the colonial state agreed to a concession by allowing for Indo-Fijian representation in the legislative council in 1929.

<sup>11</sup> See Narayan (1985:23).

<sup>12</sup> A number of Chinese (mostly male) also arrived in Fiji and set up small shops in villages and many were quickly "absorbed" into the Fijian society through inter-marriage with local women. Many set up businesses in villages and urban centres and became part of a thriving entrepreneurial class.



Defining the term "minority" is problematic but for the purpose of this paper the definition by UN Rapporteur Capotorti may be sufficient:

a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of the state, in a non-dominant position, whose members - being nationals of the state - possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language.<sup>13</sup>

An important point to remember is that the definition of minorities evolved over time as a result of complex historical developments. In addition, what has been accepted as the ethnic identities of these groups has been based on both internally generated definitions as a result of shared collective historical experiences and on externally imposed definitions attributed to them either by the state or by other ethnic groups.

In Fiji the collective historical experiences of the various groups differ considerably. Melanesians who mostly live in close communities around certain parts of Fiji, are descendants of labourers who were forcefully brought to Fiji from the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu to work on the European plantations in the nineteenth century. The Banabans, were relocated to Rabi Island in the 1940s after Ocean Island, their ancestral home, became uninhabitable after years of mining by the British Phosphate Commission. The situation of the *Vasus*, or those with mixed European and Indigenous Fijian ancestry, is different. Because of their "dual" identity, they have not been fully accepted into either the European or the Fijian communities and continue to exist on the "margins" of both communities. These examples indicate the diversity of historical experiences of these groups and the different circumstances under which they evolved their own self-identity in relation to others, to make them distinct ethnic minority groups in their own right. However, this distinctiveness has been undermined by the artificial category of "Others" or "Generals", externally imposed by the state and other groups over the years. Table 3.3 shows the various minority groups in Fiji.

TABLE 3.4: LIST OF MINORITY COMMUNITIES AND BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

COMMUNITY	BRIEF BACKGROUND
Asian	This is a very small minority, which consists of Filipinos, Burmese and other Asians who have taken up Fiji citizenship. They are mostly professionals.
Banabans	Mostly live on Rabi Island. Others live in various urban centres around Fiji. They were relocated to Rabi in the 1940s after their homeland, Ocean Island, was used for phosphate mining.
Chinese	The 'first wave' arrived in the early 20th Century and the 'second wave' arrived in the 1980s and 1990s. They are mostly businesspeople and commercial farmers.
European	Some have been in Fiji since the 1800s and others came later. Europeans are mostly involved in business and professional occupations.
Gilbertese	Small communities of Gilbertese have been in Fiji for several decades. They have largely been 'invisible' from mainstream national life.
Melanesian	They are descendants of labourers forcefully brought to Fiji to work in plantations during the 1800s 'Blackbirding' era. They largely live in communities around the main urban centres.
Part-European	These are those of mixed European and Fijian descendants, usually of Fijian matrilineal linkage.

13 United Nations. 1991. *Study on the Rights of Person Belonging to Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*. New York: United Nations. UN Sales No. E.91.XIV, para 568.



Part-Chinese	These are those of mixed Chinese and Fijian descendants, usually of Fijian matrilineal linkage
Rotuman	Sometimes classified as 'Fijians' and usually accorded the same privileges as Fijians.
Samoan	Most have been in Fiji since the early 1900s and live in isolated small communities around Fiji. Samoans who came to Fiji two centuries ago have been absorbed into the Fijian community over the years.
Tongan	Tongans have been in Fiji for a number of centuries and have been absorbed through intermarriage and cultural mix over the years. However, some of the late-comers now live in isolated communities.
Tuvaluan	Many live on Kioa Island and some live in isolated communities around Suva.
Wallis and Futuna	Many of these live in communal settlements such as the one in Tamavua. Many have been gradually absorbed in to the Fijian community through marriage.

Source: Ratuva (2000)

The minorities listed above total approximately 42,684 or 5.5% of the total Fiji population.<sup>14</sup> They generally share the following characteristics:

- They are all communities of nationals who have been established in Fiji for periods ranging from a century or more to a few decades only, but are numerically inferior to the rest of the population.
- Most possess ethnic and cultural characteristics, which make them different from the rest of the population, despite years of social interaction.
- Some are slowly 'disappearing' as a result of absorption through marriage and cultural assimilation into other communities.
- Most have been deprived of political recognition as distinct ethnic groups in their own right as a result of their inferior numerical status and weak political bargaining position. They have been simply collectively labelled 'Others' or 'Generals'.
- Most are economically underprivileged largely as a result of a lack of development policies targeted specifically towards their particular needs. Due to political and economic neglect, many are now caught in the vicious cycle of poverty.
- Some are landless, as a community and continue to depend entirely on the generosity of some local landowners and organisations, who provide them with land. Lack of land security contributes to their insecurity and vulnerability<sup>15</sup>.

Identity, a crucial theme in this research, is important in terms of how people perceive and define themselves in relation to others. Identity is socially constructed and may change due to changing circumstances. Two important components of identity are ethnicity and religion. Communal identities are internally and externally defined and the boundaries of communal definition can become a source of conflict. In Fiji, the three major ethnic groups, Indo-Fijian, Indigenous Fijian and Other minorities have evolved particular identities which, over the years, have become the basis for communal solidarity and, ironically also, a source of conflict. Because ethnic identity also shapes perception and relationships, the next section examines the dynamic interplay between communal identity on the one hand and ethnic perceptions and relationships on the other.

<sup>14</sup> Fiji Bureau of Statistics. 1998. 1996 Census of Fiji. Suva: FBS: 29.

<sup>15</sup> See Ratuva, S. 2000. *Ethnicity, National Identity and Church Unity: The Case of Fiji*. Research paper commissioned by World Council of Churches.



### 3.3 Ethnic Perceptions and Relationships

Before examining the discussants' responses relating to ethnic perceptions, in Part 4, it would be appropriate at this stage to provide a broad theoretical discussion on ethnic perceptions generally.

Communal perceptions do help to shape the way people relate to other communities. These perceptions may change, given changing circumstances. For instance, Indigenous Fijians frequently cite Indo-Fijian hard work and thrift as examples for young Indigenous Fijians to emulate in order to achieve success. The view is reinforced by Indo-Fijian dominance in commerce and education. On the flip side, this view also encourages the Indigenous Fijian self-perception of being lazy, and lacking in entrepreneurial spirit and work ethics<sup>16</sup>.

However, on the other hand, these same ethnic attributes could be reinterpreted into negative stereotyping. The "success" of Indo-Fijians for instance, can be perceived as a result of unscrupulous individualism, greed, selfishness and underhand manipulation. One of the prevalent conspiracy theories amongst the Indigenous Fijian ethno-nationalists is that demands for political reforms by Indo-Fijians are part of a greater conspiracy to supplement their commercial domination with political domination, with the ultimate aim of subjugating Indigenous Fijians, under the guise of attaining equal political rights.

Indigenous Fijians also see Chinese as hard working and ambitious and ideal models for commercial and educational achievement. At the same time they are also seen as self-centred and "Indian-like" in business dealings. However, unlike Indo-Fijians, they are considered politically more "trustworthy", because they readily intermarry with Indigenous Fijians and are perceived to be less ambitious politically<sup>17</sup>.

The Indo-Fijian perception of Indigenous Fijians is also double edged. Indigenous Fijians are seen as patient, generous and good-hearted people, while on the other hand, they are also perceived as lazy, stupid and *jungali* ('uncivilized').

### 3.4 Ethnic Perceptions and Ethnic Labels

The use of ethnic labels is a powerful tool for defining the boundaries of ethnic identity. Ethnic labels can be a tool of solidarity and empowerment on the one hand and as an instrument of suppression and disempowerment on the other, depending on how it is utilised. While the use of ethnic labels is a convenient means of affirming identification and social solidarity, it can also be a way of expressing stereotypes and prejudices.

In Fiji, the state officially categorises people into three main "races", namely "Fijian", "Indian" and "Others". These official categories define the formal ethnic boundaries, and impose their acceptance on the people themselves. The post-coup 1990 Constitution attempted to define who a "Fijian" was in relation to registration in the *Vola ni Kawa Bula*, a British-invented official record which codified landownership. This process was driven by nationalist sentiments to maintain the "purity" of the Indigenous Fijian "race" and to minimize claims on native land by those claiming to be Indigenous Fijians.

Certain ethnic labels such *Kaiviti*, *Kaidia*, *Kaisolomoni*, *Kailoma* etc. tend to conjure particular ethnic negative images. To the Indo-Fijian, the term *Kaiviti* may connote "laziness", "un-sophistication" and "stupidity". To the Indigenous Fijian, the term *Kaidia* may connote everything negative, ranging from "selfishness" and "untrustworthiness" to Mafia-type underhand conspiracy.

<sup>16</sup> See Horowitz (1985).

<sup>17</sup> This was reflected in one of Rabuka's controversial public statements in 1992.



The term *Kaidia* invokes feelings of insecurity and threat to one's land. The *Kaidia* is perceived as being always on the prowl and ready to pounce on Indigenous Fijian land. This latter perception is very strong amongst nationalists and informs much anti-Indian political rhetoric. The *Kailoma* (Part-European) is perceived as "uncultured" and confused, while the term *Kaisolomoni* (Melanesians) connotes "darkness" (literally), and primitiveness.

In many ways these stereotypes have been crystallised in the minds of many people and thus have helped to shape their perceptions, and the way they relate to others. Beyond that stereotypes have also fed into the broader political process, shaping many people's political discourse. As an example, the Fijian Nationalists have continually played on stereotypes such as *vivialevu* (lack of respect) and *kocokoco* (selfishness) of the *Kaidia* (Indian), out to *butakoca* (steal) Fijian land, using these as a means of mobilising grass-root support.

On the other hand, Indo-Fijians attribute the lack of utilisation of land to the "laziness" of Indigenous Fijians. Advertisements of properties for rent by Indo-Fijian landlords in the local media frequently call for tenants who are "preferably Indian". The idea is the Indigenous Fijian tenants are *jungali* (bushmen) who cannot properly look after a modern flat.

Stereotypes may be temporarily shelved when ethnic groups converge and dialogue in public, but in private these perceptions may still hold firm and be articulated either in a jovial or in a seriously political way. When the circumstances demand, stereotypic views are readily articulated, under the guise of euphemisms, both in the private and the public domains (as in parliament or media).

While stereotypes distort social reality, an interesting irony is that various ethnic groups have absorbed and come to believe some stereotypes about themselves. Indigenous Fijians, for instance, in many cases, believe that they are not as bright and hard-working as Indo-Fijians. The results of the research show this quite vividly.

### 3.5 Ethnic Consciousness: The Socio-cultural Genesis

Ethnic consciousness in this research refers to the process whereby perception is shaped and reproduced along ethnic lines. For instance, economic and political issues are explained fundamentally in ethnic terms. Issues, which are not even ethnic in nature, can be manipulated to have an ethnic twist. In Fiji, ethnicity is readily deployed as the dominant mode of analysis and critique, above other forms of discourse<sup>18</sup>. Many people assume that people's behaviour is due to some inherited ethnic traits. For instance inflation is seen as a result of the natural tendency of Indian businessmen to be "greedy". Or, Fijians do not do well in education because Fijians are naturally "stupid". Ethnic consciousness may breed ethnic stereotypes, as we have discussed earlier.

Ethnic consciousness in Fiji, as in many other pluralistic societies, develops at various levels of society, through a complex process of multiple socialisation at various stages of life. Understanding these processes may be useful in identifying the sites of tension and conflict and in devising how they can be addressed.

Ethnic consciousness is neither a static nor a 'natural' tendency for humans, as some observers would rather suggest. Rather it is a result of the deliberate politicisation of socialisation. In other words, how we categorise and perceive others is part of a social dynamic. We interact both consciously and instinctively as individuals and as members of a group. This process produces and reproduces ethnic consciousness. Table 3.5 examines some of the modes of interaction, which help to shape people's ethnic consciousness.

18 See Ratuva (1999).



TABLE 3.5: MODES OF INTERACTION WHICH SHAPE ETHNIC CONSCIOUSNESS IN FIJI

Context of Interaction	Application to Fiji Context
Primary Socialisation	This refers to the construction of <i>self</i> through the early stages of socialisation at home, through peer association, schools and media. Families in Fiji exist in an ethnically diverse society and are most likely to pass on notions of ethnic differences to children. Peer groups in Fiji are in some cases, based on an ethnic-based neighbourhood. In the rural areas, there are separate Indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian villages, and in urban areas, there are some ethnically exclusive neighbourhoods but most are now integrated. Many schools in Fiji are still ethnically based, although there is an increasing tendency for integration. The dominance of ethnic issues in Fiji's media could also be responsible for moulding peoples' ethnic consciousness at an early age. The parents' prejudices could also be passed down at this stage of socialisation.
Routine Social Interaction	There is some degree of inter-ethnic interaction in public places, such as pubs and leisure areas. The nature of the environment could determine the way people relate in public. However, there is still a very well defined pattern of ethnically exclusive interaction. For instance, in towns, with some exceptions, Indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians still largely mingle within their own kind, but there is also increasing interaction. In many ways, the public sphere becomes an extension of the ethnically exclusive private sphere.
Sexual Relationships	Sexual relations between Indian women and Indigenous Fijian men is minimal, although there is considerable sexual engagement between Indo-Fijian men and Indigenous Fijian women. The Indigenous Fijian society is quite liberal with regards to sexual mores, while there are rigid codes for Indo-Fijians, in particular for women. Even sexual relations within the various Indo-Fijian ethnic groups is still culturally restricted.
Communal Interaction	Communal relations between Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians was largely defined by the colonial policy of "divide and rule". While relations between Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians are largely cordial at the grassroots level, the politicisation and ethnicisation of issues by politicians has created conditions for increased tension between the communities.
Membership of Informal groups	Some informal group membership is mainly along ethnic lines. For instance, <i>yagona</i> clubs, mothers clubs etc. are based on kinship or locality and thus tend to be ethnically differentiated. At the same time, there are many multi-ethnic groups.
Marriage and Kinship	Inter-ethnic marriage between Indigenous Fijian men and Indo-Fijian women is extremely rare, due to the strict cultural codes, especially for many Indo-Fijian women. There is a substantial number of inter-marriages between Indigenous Fijian women and Indo-Fijian men. However, in many cases, there is still an underlying cultural and political perception by both sides that Indigenous Fijian-Indo-Fijian marriage is unacceptable. But marriage between the two groups and Europeans is common. Many early Europeans and Chinese migrants married Fijian women and as a result, there is now a sizeable Part-Europeans and Part-Chinese community in Fiji. Inter-marriage between the various minority communities is quite common.



Socio-Economic Relations	Participation in the market is much more integrated. But there are still some ethnic tendencies. More Indo-Fijians than Indigenous Fijians own businesses. Indigenous Fijians own most of the land (83%). A significant portion of this land is leased out to Indo-Fijian farmers and the lease arrangements, under ALTA have or will soon come to an end. This is a possible cause of economic instability. There are as many poor Indigenous Fijians as poor Indo-Fijians. Most of the major companies are foreign owned and a sizable portion of local companies belong to Indo-Fijians. However, there is an expanding Indigenous Fijian middle class with interest in financial investment and commerce. According to the 1996 census, Fijians still lag behind other ethnic groups in the corporate sector senior managerial employment category by a factor of 1:6.
Labour Market Relations	Since the military coup in 1987, Indigenous Fijians have dominated the public sector. On the other hand, Indo-Fijians, especially the Gujarates, have been predominant in the private sector. There is an increasing penetration of Indigenous Fijian interests in the private sector. However, in terms of specific jobs, there is generally an ethnic mix. The trade unions are generally multi-ethnic but there are still ethnically based ones.
Social Group Affiliation	There is still a certain degree of ethnic differentiation in this area. For instance some sports clubs are still ethnically exclusive. Rugby is traditionally associated with Indigenous Fijians, soccer with Indo-Fijians (although this has changed significantly) and hockey and swimming with Europeans and Part Europeans. There has increasingly been a certain degree of ethnic interaction in sports. For instance, Indo-Fijians have taken up rugby and Indigenous Fijians have made inroads into soccer and hockey. Many other sports are ethnically integrated. Golf is largely an elite sport by all ethnic groups. ,
Religious Affiliation	Most Indigenous Fijians are Christians while most Indo-Fijians are either Hindus or Muslims. Religious interaction in the form of inter-religious worship and institutional cooperation is minimal.
Institutionalized Politics	Political parties are organised along ethnic lines and the political discourse at the national level is largely ethnic-based. The government is largely Indigenous Fijian and the Opposition is largely Indo-Fijian.
Ethnic Classification	The state through the constitution officially categorises Fiji citizens into rigid ethnic classifications. The main official categories are: "Fijian", "Indian" and "Others". These classifications determine one's voting rights and access to scholarships and other forms of affirmative action. They constitute the official, state imposed identity, as opposed to self-defined identity.

Source: Ratuva (2000:18)



Thus we see that ethnic consciousness involves a complex interaction of various socio-cultural, political, ideological and psychological forces, both informal and formal. These range from the most personal and private to the most formal and public. In Fiji, attempts to address the question of peace building should focus on how these forces can be identified and addressed directly. It could be argued that the responses gauged in the empirical research, to be analysed in Part 4, are directly or indirectly shaped by the contexts of interactions discussed in the table.

The different factors identified in Table 3.5 can serve opposing interests. They can be the basis for ethnic differentiation and tension, and at the same time, they can also be used as a basis for peace building. How this is done will require proper analysis and the political will, together with careful strategisation, to effectively change the situation. At the same time the prevailing sentiments of ethnic groups and individuals must be handled sensitively.

### **3.6 Summary**

The broad discussion of issues in Part 3 provides a sociological context for the analysis of the field research responses in Part 4.

- Identities are important in maintaining social solidarity and communal dignity. However, they can also change, given changing circumstances. In Fiji, the construction and evolution of identities resulted from the Colonial Native Policy, which locked different ethnic groups into different compartments.
- Ethnic perceptions, in the form of stereotypes and prejudices, influence the way we relate to people.
- Labels are very important in defining ethnic boundaries and identity. They provide the framework within which communities define themselves. Labels can be either a means of emancipation, leading to self-realisation and identification; or be a means of disempowerment, marginalisation and oppression.
- Ethnic consciousness is developed through various formal and informal means. Identifying these means will enable us to properly address the question of ethnic conflict.



## Part 4

### 4.0 Analysis of Responses

#### 4.1 Approach to Analysis of the Responses

The responses from the focus groups were based on consensus. The response of each focus group is analysed below using three approaches.

- The first approach deals with identifying and outlining the major focus of the collective response. The first was an attempt to identify the main thrust of the collective response.
- The second approach deals with making a comparative discussion of the different perceptions by different ethnic groups. Collective responses of each focus group were compared and contrasted to gauge differences and similarities. This is important in terms of identifying areas of broader agreements. The second compares the different perceptions by different ethnic groups. This also included comparing the collective responses from different groups to identify areas of consensus.
- The third approach deals with discussing the collective responses in relation to broader sociological contexts. The third discusses the collective responses in a broader social and political context.

The analysis does not attempt to re-interpret the collective responses. While in some cases attempts will be made to sociologically contextualise the responses, the responses are basically presented as they were articulated. As much as possible the intended original meanings are presented.

Because the results were largely based on consensus, there is no breakdown of the specific views of particular groups. Wherever there were divergent views, these were noted down. In most cases only one or two participants disagreed with the majority. The results, by and large, attempt to capture the general trends in collective perception.

#### 4.2 Analysis of Responses

The analysis section is divided into three parts, basically following the categorisation of questions in the questionnaire. The first part is on Inter-Ethnic and Cultural Perception; the second on Inter-Religious Perception; and the third on National Consciousness and Common Identity. Collective responses to each question are analysed separately and the actual number of the question on the original questionnaire (see Appendix 1) is in brackets besides the question sub-heading.

##### 4.2.1 Inter-Ethnic and Cultural Perception

This section broadly deals with inter-ethnic and cultural perception. It attempts to gauge people's perceptions of themselves and of their communities in relation to others. It also examines cultural symbols and their relationship to cultural identity.

##### A. DEFINITION OF CULTURE (QUESTION 3.1)

The discussants were asked what they understood by the term "culture". We take for granted that we understand what it means because we are inherently part of it and use the term frequently in our daily lives. This question required the participants to consider carefully what they meant by culture. In multi-ethnic societies such as Fiji, the term culture can be deployed to invoke feelings of ethnic antagonism. The question attempted to provide some broad definitional background to the questions which followed.



The responses from all ethnic groups were generally similar. Instead of a general definition, the discussants broke the definition down into specific cultural aspects such as identity, values, beliefs, ethnicity, code of conduct, cultural heritage, language, dress and food. These were cultural aspects, which were experienced and "lived" at the everyday level. There were much more sociologically profound responses which defined culture in terms of learned and shared behaviour and collective consciousness.

However, all the definitions and views about culture presented revolved around "ethnic culture". That is, culture was conceptualised in the context of the way of life of a particular ethnic group. Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians defined culture in ways, which applied exclusively to their own community.

Of the two levels of cultural discourse—culture as a monolithic and homogeneous entity which shapes people's behaviour and perception, and culture as the dynamic process by which people live their everyday life - the responses were more confined to the latter.

#### B. IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF OWN CULTURE (QUESTION 3.2)

This question probed people's view of significant aspects of their culture. Generally people claim to be part of an ethnic culture. At the same time they can be very selective about particular aspects of their culture, which they feel close to. An ideological and political dimension to this question is that in times of ethnic and political conflict, people often use significant aspects of their culture to articulate their grievances. They may respond in various ways (including violently) when they feel that these important aspects are "violated".

This question was more focused than Question 3.1 and allowed discussants to look at their own cultures more selectively and discriminatively.

There were two levels of responses to this question. At the first level, the discussants from different ethnic groups referred to relatively universal norms and ethics such as respect for elders, traditional values, identity and language. At the second level, the responses were more specific to the "ethnic" culture. For instance Indo-Fijians referred to their religious practices, while Indigenous Fijians referred to their attitudes to hospitality and land, as well as to the *yaqona* ceremony and the *kerekere* system.

#### C. ROLE OF CULTURAL SYMBOLS (QUESTION 3.3)

For this question, the discussants' views on the relationship between cultural symbols and cultural identity were sought. Symbols largely embody cultural meanings. This question was relatively difficult because it involved conceptualising links between two abstract entities.

The responses from the various ethnic groups were generally similar, except when examples were emphasised. There was general agreement that symbols were important in reinforcing identity and acted as a unifying force in any society. Some saw symbolism as an expression of the uniqueness of a particular culture as well as a means of influencing behaviour and of defining culture. Some Indo-Fijian discussants identified some important cultural symbols such as Indian food, dress code, *sari* (e.g. white for widows and red for married women), *tika* and bangles as being important in defining the boundaries of Indian identity. Some Indigenous Fijian discussants identified things like the *tabua* (whale's tooth) and the war club as examples of cultural symbols. Some participants belonging to both ethnic groups argued that symbols were not very useful, while some said that they had not really thought about their significance.



Being able to see the cultural significance of symbols constitutes an important component of cultural understanding because symbols are themselves cultural constructions embodying different levels of meaning.

#### D. SYMBOLS OF OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS (QUESTION 3.4)

This question followed on from the previous one and tried to gauge peoples' understanding of the cultural symbols of other ethnic groups. Most participants readily recognised and were able to identify the symbols of other ethnic groups. For instance, Indo-Fijians were able to identify such Indigenous Fijian symbols as *tabua* (whales tooth), mats, *salusalu* (chained flowers for wearing around neck) and *yaqona*. Similarly, Indigenous Fijians were able to identify Indo-Fijian cultural symbols such as hardi body paint and *salwar kameez*. Other cultural symbols belonging to other ethnic groups were also identified-examples were *kimono* (Japanese), flowers (Polynesian), dragon (Chinese) tattoo (Samoan) *tapa* and *taavala* (Tongan).

Some participants were also able to identify the cultural significance of some of the above-mentioned cultural symbols. Many Indo-Fijian participants were able to relate the *tabua* to various ceremonies, including those of reconciliation, while many Indigenous Fijians referred to the ceremonial roles of the symbols mentioned.

It appeared that while some cultural symbols were identified, their meanings were only vaguely understood. This was because the depth of people's understanding of symbolism was determined by the relevance of the symbols in their daily activities. More "distant" symbols were usually perceived in generalised terms only.

Cultural symbols can be understood at two levels. Firstly, the level of universal identification; that is, almost every aspect of culture ranging from language to eating utensils, can be construed as "symbolic" of something. Secondly, the level of particularistic and esoteric identification. In this case, only particular objects, whether material or abstract, are imbued with mystical qualities that symbolise particular cultural values. Most of the responses dealt with the latter. The fact that the participants were able to identify particularistic and esoteric symbols shows a high degree of knowledge of (as opposed to understanding of) other cultures.

#### E. SUPERIORITY OF OWN CULTURE (QUESTION 3.5)

This question was meant to test the participants' sense of cultural relativity- that is how they judge their own cultures relative to others. Related to this was the need to gauge the degree of ethnocentrism (tendency to judge other cultures using the standard of one's own culture) of the participants. This question was important in terms of understanding the depth of ethnic prejudice among participants.

The responses to this question were mixed and there was no definite pattern based on ethnic differences. Amongst both Indo-Fijian and Indigenous Fijian participants there were two sets of responses. Firstly, there were those who claimed that their cultures were "superior". Some Indo-Fijian discussants asserted that, their culture was unique and a source of self-pride. It was indicated that the fact that Indo-Fijians were more hard-working than the other ethnic groups, in particular than the Indigenous Fijians, made them feel superior. On the other hand, some Indigenous Fijian participants argued that certain aspects of the Fijian culture such as land-ownership and values such as respect, pride, hospitality and special cultural rituals made them "superior" to others.

The second set of responses was oriented towards universal cultural equality. The general thrust of the responses was that each culture was important and there needed to be respect for the



uniqueness of each culture. It was emphasised that racism was socially unhealthy and needed to be eradicated, and that all cultures were equal and no culture could claim to be superior. Some respondents argued that cultures may be different but they were not to be stratified as either superior or inferior. Other related suggestions were that everyone was born equal but our problems had to do with lack of information and understanding of others.

#### F. INFERIORITY OF OWN CULTURE (QUESTION 3.6)

This was merely an extension of the previous question as it dealt with the question of cultural relativity, but this time dealing with perception of the "inferiority" of one's own culture.

There were two sets of responses to this question. In the first, participants argued that all cultures were equal and people were generally proud of who they were. In the second, some participants identified certain aspects of their own cultures, which they considered "inferior". For instance some Indo-Fijians said that members of their ethnic group were generally "not very generous" and "our Indian culture undermines and oppresses women". Some even said that Indigenous Fijians were more "understanding", "open" and "friendly". Similarly, some Indigenous Fijians identified "land ownership", "cultural priorities over family obligations", the desire for "personal gain rather than love", "dominance of chiefly leadership", "wrong priorities in family and church" as inherent weaknesses of their own culture. These, they argued made the Indigenous Fijian culture "inferior".

Interestingly, "faults" which participants identified in their own cultures were also seen as "strengths" in other cultures. The responses showed a constant pattern of cultural self-definition in relation to outside standards.

#### G. LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS OF OWN CULTURE (QUESTION 3.7)

This question required the participants to critically distinguish between what they considered to be the "limitations" and the "strengths" of their own culture. Although linked to the previous question, this one was slightly different. It was meant to gauge the participants' own self-reflection and critical evaluation of their own cultures.

Indo-Fijian participants listed a number of "limitations" such as *kava* abuse, exploitation of women, cultural rigidity, lengthy rituals, cultural conservatism, greed, money-mindedness, eating restrictions, selfishness, back-stabbing and cut throat ambition. On the other hand, however, they argued that, despite all of the above, their community still retained a very strong sense of identity which had helped them to maintain cultural unity and cohesion.

The Indigenous Fijian participants also listed a number of "limitations" of their own culture. These were: fixed ascribed status; loss of vernacular; excessive cultural obligations; exploitation of women; observance of taboos which, tend to weaken love and sexual relationships; rigid norms which tended to be barriers to economic freedom; and limitations imposed by traditional hierarchy on personal freedom and choice.

As for strengths, the discussants identified the following: strong socio-cultural bonds; the significant role played by the traditional hierarchy; kinship and family support; collective collaboration; and land ownership and utilisation.

Interestingly, the responses from the two main ethnic groups reflected a mixture of two modes of perceptions. Firstly, some of the views expressed reflected existing stereotypes about their own communities. In many cases, members of a community had "absorbed", and even "believed" cultural stereotypes, whether positive or negative, imposed by others about themselves. What



may have initially been a "negative" stereotype over time had become a source of pride, and a new form of identity. Secondly, some of the responses reflected the participants' own experiences, especially where certain cultural values inhibited their personal interests.

#### H. LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS OF OTHER CULTURES IN FIJI (QUESTION 3.8)

This question was the opposite of Question 3.7, as it required the participants to provide views on some of the "limitations" and "strengths" of other cultures. The responses to this question showed a certain degree of ethnic prejudice, partly based on a belief in stereotypes and on a tendency to generalise about others.

In relation to limitations of other cultures, Indo-Fijian participants perceived Indigenous Fijians as being too communal and as wasting too much food on funerals, where they could not afford to do so. They were also perceived as being "primitive" caring little for education and for the future of their children and only prepared to sacrifice for their chiefs. In addition, Indigenous Fijians were seen as being lazy and as relying on chiefs, rather than on themselves. They were also seen as narrow minded, intolerant of other religions and lacking independence. Some Indo-Fijian discussants perceived Chinese as sly and cunning.

However, the same Indo-Fijian participants also praised some aspects of Indigenous Fijian culture as being exemplary. For instance they pointed out that Indigenous Fijians were a united, cohesive and stable community. In addition they valued things like respect, and generosity. Other "strengths" identified included openness, helpfulness, more liberal attitudes than Indo-Fijian ones, healthy food and a relaxed attitude to life.

The responses by Indigenous Fijian participants followed a similar pattern. Indo-Fijians were perceived as being greedy, ignorant, selfish, individualistic and too money-minded. They were also perceived as having the tendency to reject and discriminate against other cultures. The Chinese were portrayed as "selfish business people", just like the Indo-Fijians.

On the other hand, Indigenous Fijian participants also saw Indo-Fijians as models to emulate. They were seen as hard working and industrious with a strong identity reinforced through intra-ethnic marriage. Indo-Fijians were also seen as independent and their success was attributed to their ability to save, sense of independence and wise use of time and money.

A clear pattern, which emerged, was that there are two sides to stereotypes. Firstly, they represent generalised prejudices about a community. Secondly, the same "negative" values attributed to a group can be seen as "positive" in other circumstances. For instance, while Indo-Fijian participants brand Indigenous Fijians as "lazy", they also admire their "leisurely" and "relaxed" life. On the other hand, while Indigenous Fijians brand Indo-Fijians as "selfish" and "greedy", they admire their "hard-working" ethos. In fact, Indigenous Fijian students today are constantly told by their parents to emulate Indo-Fijian children in education, commerce and other areas, which require self-innovation. Indo-Fijian work ethos in education and commerce are generally perceived by Indigenous Fijians as ideal models for progress.

The positive ethnic perceptions, which underlie the negative ethnic perceptions, provide us with an important potential for peace building at the community level. These positive perceptions and attitudes need to be identified and nurtured as part of the bridge building process.

#### I. HOW OTHER COMMUNITIES PERCEIVE YOUR CULTURE (QUESTION 3.9)

The discussants were asked how they thought other cultures would perceive them. The purpose of this question was to gauge the extent of "ethnic suspicion" between various ethnic groups.



The Indo-Fijian participants believed that other ethnic groups perceived their community both positively and negatively. Some felt that positive features included hard-working ethic, unique culture, good food and exotic dress. The negative perceptions identified were being stingy, money mindedness, not being open to other cultures, being disrespectful, being cold-hearted, being materialistic, old fashioned and racist. There was also concern raised that other cultures continued to mock and ridicule the Indo-Fijian language, dances and religious practices.

Like-wise, Indigenous Fijian participants believed that other ethnic groups saw the Indigenous Fijian community in terms of both positive and negative characteristics. The positive characteristics were hospitality and friendliness. The negative characteristics identified were being too laid back, laziness, being too communal and too nationalistic. There was a general feeling that other ethnic groups looked down on the Indigenous Fijian culture as being too expensive and "hypocritical".

The responses to this question largely reflected the ethnic stereotypes, which are reproduced in the Fiji society. By articulating those stereotypes, the discussants showed they were aware of inter-ethnic prejudices, and helped to recycle the various modes of perception. Stereotypes are not always taken seriously, sometimes they are perceived and accepted in a humorous way.

#### J. ADOPTION OF ASPECTS OF OTHER CULTURES (QUESTION 3.9)

This question was aimed at getting the participants to identify certain aspects of other cultures, which the participants' cultures could adopt. The question was meant to test the participants' capacity to engage in dialogue and close interaction leading to assimilation with other ethnic groups.

Both the Indo-Fijian and Indigenous Fijian participants believed that inter-ethnic interaction was possible through greater social inter-course. Inter-ethnic marriage was considered an important foundation for fuller inter-cultural interaction. There were also suggestions that Indigenous Fijians should learn the business skills of Indo-Fijians and Indo-Fijians should learn to be more open and generous like Indigenous Fijians. There was a strong feeling that there should be greater assimilation and "give and take" between the two major ethnic groups.

However, there were also strong views expressed by participants of both major ethnic groups, which resisted greater interaction and assimilation. Reasons provided were that it would lead to erosion of culture and weaken communal solidarity.

#### 4.2.2 Religious Perception

The questions in this section are focused on religious perception. They attempt to address the issues of religious relations, symbolism and unity.

##### A. IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION (QUESTION 4.1)

This question attempted to understand how the participants valued religion. Religion has always played an important role in providing moral guidance, legitimising cultural practices and enabling political mobilisation. Thus in terms of inter-ethnic relations, religion plays a pivotal role and in this regard, it is important to understand the inner feelings of people in relation to their faith.

Participants of all ethnic groups viewed religion as very important in their lives. Some said that it was above everything else in terms of priority. Some were more analytical and attempted to categorise "the importance of religion" according to a scale, from "very important" to "not very important". Some said that religion "as such" (as an institution) was not important but what was important was people's personal faith in god and respect for good deeds.



## B. LINK BETWEEN CULTURE AND RELIGION (QUESTION 4.2)

Religion and culture are two powerful forces, which provide legitimacy to people's sense of both prejudice and goodwill. This question required participants to conceptualise the links between culture and religion as a way of understanding their inner conception of the two phenomena.

Many participants viewed religion as part of culture. In fact, most of them saw a very close and strong link between religion and culture. There was a general view that they reinforced each other, that a strong religion was the basis for a strong culture; and that cultural values such as love, obedience and unity were reinforced by religious teachings. As a specific example, some Indo-Fijian participants referred to their vegetarian diets and certain forms of restriction as cultural practices imposed by religious beliefs.

However, some Indo-Fijian discussants also pointed out that many South Indian Indo-Fijians were Christians, so, while their religious practices may be different, they still adhered to many cultural practices such as dress and food, which identified them as Indo-Fijians.

Indigenous Fijians also identified certain cultural aspects, which they thought were reinforced by religion. Some of these were: respect for chiefs, love, unity and even the *kerekere* system, which was thought to involve "giving more and expecting less". There was a general view that these cultural values were divinely sanctioned.

The responses showed that religion was perceived as an integral component of everyday life rather than a "special" mystical phenomenon. In other words, in terms of everyday human relations, invocation of religion, to explain and justify, were considered vital processes.

## C. PERCEPTION OF RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS (QUESTION 4.3)

This question was aimed at soliciting views about whether religious teachings could be changed to suit changing circumstances. Because religion is a very powerful force, both for legitimising and maintaining the status quo, and as an agent of social change, the question was important to gauge the participants' views about the potential of religion to change and embrace new ideas.

Some Indo-Fijians argued that religion has been changing anyway. It was pointed out that the attainment of more equality for women and the conversion of some Hindus to Christianity were two manifestations of religious changes in the Indo-Fijian community. Changes, it was argued were inevitable. It was further argued that a lot had changed since Indo-Fijians arrived in Fiji, for instance the Hindu caste system and some rituals had disappeared.

Amongst the Indigenous Fijian participants, there was divergence of views. Some pointed out that change in the church's teaching was a positive thing in order for people to progress. It was argued that changes in culture demanded change in religion so religion must keep abreast. Another view was that it was good for people to question religion and also there was a need for more freedom to choose which religious teachings should be discarded.

However, some argued that to change religious teachings would destroy the guidelines for moral behaviour and this would lead to confusion. Some were adamant that Christian teachings must remain unquestioned since they were part of God's law and must be followed at all cost. The doctrines, it was argued, could not be changed since they were based on the teachings of the scriptures. But it was pointed out that presentations by preachers should be made simpler to avoid misunderstanding.

The two contrasting views may reflect the division of views in Fiji society generally. The desire for change in religious teachings does signal potential for inter-cultural interaction, while the dogmatic and reactionary view may signal difficulties in reconciling religious differences.



## D. ACCOMMODATING VIEWS OF OTHER RELIGIONS (QUESTION 4.4)

The question considers how inter-religious accommodation of views could take place. The question was meant to spur the participants to think positively about possible inter-religious accommodation.

There was a general feeling that interfaith programs should be encouraged to promote understanding, tolerance and respect between religious groups. It was also suggested that there should be more education towards religious understanding and respect for differences.

However, specific views regarding differences were also articulated. For instance, some Indo-Fijian participants believed that the Hindu religion was very accommodating, in contrast to Christianity which was not. On the other hand, some Indigenous Fijian participants believed that the over-whelming differences between religions made it difficult to accommodate other beliefs.

## E. IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS (QUESTION 4.5)

Religious symbols, whether tangible or abstract, are an important aspect of worship. Much religious conflict is caused, not so much by differences in faith itself, but by the manipulation and undermining of religious symbols. This can easily become very political, especially when religious symbolism is deployed as a means of political mobilisation. Therefore, it is important to understand some underlying sentiments relating to religious symbols.

Most of the participants stated that religious symbols were important and sacred and needed to be respected. The religious symbols, it was argued, were pointers to the divine order and were a link between God and society. A few discussants however argued that religious symbols were not important at all but what was important was people's faith as individuals.

## F. SYMBOLS OF OTHER RELIGIONS (QUESTION 4.6)

This question was more direct and required the participants to identify and discuss the symbols of other religions. The question was to find out the extent of people's understanding of other religions.

Some Indo-Fijian participants expressed the general view that they respected Christian symbols such as the cross because it meant sacredness and was an important means of identification. Others saw symbols such as the cross as merely forms of "fashion" design, without any significance.

In contrast, the Indigenous Fijian discussants perceived Hindu religious symbols negatively. Some said that they meant nothing to them while some said that they were symbols of the occult. Terms used to refer to Hindu symbols included "demonic", "bondage", "indifference" and "idolatry".

However, there was also a strong view by some Indigenous Fijian participants that the symbols of religions other than Christianity needed to be understood and respected.

## G. COMMON VALUES BETWEEN RELIGIONS (QUESTION 4.7)

This question was intended to focus the participants' minds on identifying some common values between religions. This could be a way of identifying areas of convergence that needed to be "captured" and "nurtured".

The responses to this question by most participants were largely positive and very embracing. Some of the "common values" identified were love, respect, justice, peace, tolerance, worship and prayer. There was even a philosophical view that all religions were "trinitarian" (belief in three entities). For instance Christians believed in the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit, while the Hindus believe in the primacy of the three elements of fire-water-air, and also the creator-preserver-destroyer. Another view held that a common characteristic of all religions was that they all had hierarchical systems.



#### H. POSSIBILITY OF A COMMON RELIGIOUS SYMBOL FOR ALL RELIGIONS IN FIJI (QUESTION 4.8)

The purpose of this question was to gauge the participants' opinions on whether it was at all possible to sacrifice one's religious symbol for a common national religious symbol.

Some argued that for the sake of unity and reconciliation and to address intolerance, a common symbol was important. One of the symbols suggested was a lit candle. It was seen as the symbol of warmth, national reconciliation and national unity. Some said since we all worshipped the same God, it was important to break down the barriers and integrate with a common identity as creatures of God.

There was also resistance to the idea of a common religious identity. Some argued that a common religious identity would undermine individual religious identity and solidarity. These people said that differences were important and healthy because they symbolised our various unique identities. Furthermore, there was a view that it was impossible to find a common symbol acceptable to everyone. Diversity and uniqueness must be maintained and symbols must not be imposed on other religions because this would be tantamount to a restriction of freedom of religion.

#### I. PROBLEMS OF RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES IN FIJI (QUESTION 4.9)

This question addressed some of the problems relating to religious differences in Fiji.

A number of problems were listed by the participants. They are as follows: self-righteousness; feeling of religious inferiority by some; feeling that some religions were superior to others; style of worship which disturbs or insults others; competition; rivalry; religious intolerance; contradiction between faiths; different values (e.g. between monotheism and polytheism); and too many differences rather than similarities.

These problems, it was argued needed to be addressed to ensure harmonious relations and social peace.

#### J. IMPROVEMENT OF INTER-RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING (QUESTION 4.10)

This question sought to find ways to improve inter-religious understanding.

The responses to this question showed consensus among all participants. The respondents recommended various means such as fostering interfaith, inter-marriage, learning each other's language, education on religious understanding at all levels of school, emphasis on similarities, respect for others, understanding differences, understanding that basics in religion are the same, dialogue, fellowship, religious integration and leaders working together.

### 4.2.3 National Consciousness and Common Identity

For this last section, the participants were asked questions relating to the issues of national consciousness and common identity. The questions in this section followed on from the two previous sections.

#### A. CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS BARRIERS TO INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS (QUESTION 5.1)

The question requested discussants to identify some of the religious and cultural barriers to inter-ethnic relations on a national scale.

The Indo-Fijian participants identified the following: lack of intermarriage; misinterpretation of religious symbols; looking down on others; ignorance; inability to speak Fijian; different methods of socialisation; superiority complex; and intolerance of differences. Some Indo-Fijian participants

also identified certain assumed cultural traits such as "Indians think of tomorrow but Fijians think of today only" as barriers to good ethnic relations. Some Indo-Fijians put the blame on others- for instance, they believed that the cow was sacred but others saw it only as source of food. They also argued that the Hindu religion was very tolerant of differences.

The Indigenous Fijian participants listed a number of their own cultural values, which they thought were barriers to religious and ethnic tolerance. These were: hypocrisy (not practicing what was preached); clash of beliefs; ignorance of religious symbols; differences in language and codes of behaviour; blind loyalty and pride in own culture; backbiting; jealousy; and suspicion of other races.

However, at the same time there were positive sentiments expressed about some aspects of Indigenous Fijian relationships with other ethnic groups. For instance, it was said that Indigenous Fijians were always reaching out to others. The use of English as the common medium was said to open up doors to more interactions. Many proudly said that they celebrated each other's cultural/religious ceremonies.

#### B. WORKABILITY OF A HARMONIOUS MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIETY (QUESTION 5.2)

This question was aimed at gathering views on whether the idea of a harmonious multi-cultural society was actually workable in Fiji. The question was meant to delve deep into people's hearts and extract honest responses.

A number of participants said that it was possible to create a harmonious multi-cultural society provided there was respect for each other's culture and religion and also if we learnt from the consequences of conflict in other plural societies. While some said that this would take time, some said that the fact that we have lived together peacefully mostly without violence for a long time shows that we can continue to live together.

But there were those who argued that it was difficult to create a harmonious multi-cultural society in Fiji because of what they saw as irreconcilable differences. Some referred to this situation pessimistically as a consequence of "human nature". Other reasons given were that there was so much ignorance, selfishness and conflicting values to render national harmony unworkable. Some said that there were too many differences for people to unite and people with personal interests would not want to integrate with others. Some Indigenous Fijians argued that Indo-Fijians generally did not want to integrate and reconcile.

The responses showed a mixture of pessimism and optimism regarding the possibility of a harmonious multi-cultural society.

#### C. ETHNIC DIFFERENCES AS CAUSE OF CONFLICT (QUESTION 5.3)

The question was a general one, to gauge people's opinion about a generally accepted assumption, that ethnic differences of themselves cause conflict.

Some Indo-Fijian discussants claimed that Indigenous Fijians, being the dominant ethnic group, were always trying to "exploit" Indo-Fijians, and an example presented was the rejection of an Indo-Fijian Prime Minister, leading to the 2000 coup. Another view was that Fijian rights were well protected under the 1997 Constitution yet they continued to exert their demands.

On the other hand, some Indo-Fijian discussants did not see ethnic differences as such, as causes of ethnic conflict, but rather other things such as religious differences, self-interest, greed for power, personal propaganda of politicians, use of ethnic differences to influence people and bad leadership.



Some Indigenous Fijian participants believed that ethnic differences, especially differences in ideas, caused ethnic conflict. On the other hand, others argued that it was not so much ethnic differences but a range of emotions and attitudes including fear of losing land, provincialism, greed for wealth, power and status, differences in religious beliefs, economic exploitation and political manipulation which sparked ethnic hostility.

#### D. SUGGESTIONS FOR COMPROMISES (QUESTION 5.4)

This question dealt with people's perception about inter-cultural compromises, once certain areas of differences and disputes had been identified.

Suggestions for compromises with other cultures varied greatly. Some suggested joint business affiliation between ethnic groups, while others suggested a more representative parliament. Some also suggested the adoption of each other's cultural practices and integration at different levels of society. Some suggested emphasis on compulsory learning of each other's language and inter-marriage.

#### E. COMMON CULTURAL SYMBOL FOR A UNITED FIJI (QUESTION 5.5)

Having identified some areas of cultural compromise, this question sought to identify a common cultural symbol for a united Fiji.

A number of suggestions were put forward by the discussants. These were people holding hands, a coconut, a collage of pictures of all religious symbols together, a white dove, the ocean, a golden tabua and a tree.

#### F. BRIGHT FUTURE FOR FIJI (QUESTION 5.6)

The final question tested the participants' sense of optimism and hope by asking whether they saw any hope for a bright future for Fiji.

Those who responded positively said that democracy was still alive and if people work together, compromise and forge unity there will surely be hope. A voice of optimism echoed that the young generation was the main hope for the country and this generation was ready for peace and harmony.

There were also some pessimistic views, which argued that the present political climate was not conducive to a bright future. There was too much conflict between traditional and democratic leadership and furthermore, people were too greedy and there was too much corruption and unemployment. It was also suggested that people were migrating in large numbers as a result of their loss of confidence in the country.

### 4.3 Conclusion

The views analysed above provide us with an insight into what people are thinking expressed collectively. Some opinions were based on dominant stereotypes and prejudices, some were an expression of intellectual innocence, and some were well thought out judgements about the complexity of the Fiji society.

The participants awarded high accolades to the PPA process, saying that it enabled them to express their views more confidently when they had to discuss their private thoughts with others. There was consensus that the process of PPA itself was a great learning experience, as the discussants began to see the logic of the process. Most felt that the prejudices they once held were changed as a result of collective dialogue, which enabled them to see the logic in other people's thinking.

## Part 5

### 5.0 Summary of Findings

Below is a brief summary of the findings of the research detailed in Part 4.

1. Broadly, most discussants defined culture in relation to "ethnicity". That is, culture was conceptualised in the context of the way of life of a particular ethnic group.
2. Of the two levels of cultural discourse- culture as a monolithic and homogeneous entity which shaped people's behaviour and perception, and culture as the dynamic process which people lived in their everyday life- the responses were more confined to the latter.
3. People generally claimed to be part of a broad ethnic culture, yet at the same time they were selective about particular aspects of their ethnic culture, which they felt close to.
4. There was a general understanding that cultural symbols were important components of ethnic identity. However, there was difficulty in conceptualising how these symbols actually reinforce or reproduce ethnic and cultural identity.
5. Cultural symbols of various ethnic groups were easily identified by others, although the cultural meanings were not always clearly understood.
6. There was mixed reaction regarding the superiority or inferiority of one's own culture. Some identified "weak" aspects of their culture as "evidence" of "cultural inferiority" while some identified "strong" aspects of their culture as "evidence" of "cultural superiority".
7. "Weaknesses" identified in one's own culture were also seen as "strengths" in other cultures. An underlying intellectual process observed was the constant pattern of cultural self-definition in relation to standards of other cultures.
8. Self-perceptions regarding limitations and strengths of one's own culture were largely perceived in terms of internalised stereotypes imposed by others.
9. The limitations and strengths of other cultures were also viewed in relation to stereotypes. Stereotypes have both negative and positive aspects. In many cases they are different sides of the same coin. A situation or behaviour, which may be considered negative in one situation, may be perceived as positive in another.
10. The discussants were generally suspicious about how other communities view their culture. There is a general view that people perceive other cultures through stereotypes.



11. Greater inter-ethnic interaction was seen as possible and to be encouraged. However, it was also felt that it could also lead to the erosion of one's culture.
12. Religion was perceived as a very important part of one's life. Many said they could not live without religion.
13. Religion and culture were perceived as inseparable components of each other, thus to insult one's religion, was to insult one's culture too, and vice versa.
14. Religious teachings, were considered changeable under certain circumstances. At the same time, it was felt that to change religious teachings could lead to confusion.
15. There was a general feeling that there was a need for each religious group to accommodate the views of others, as a precondition for sustainable dialogue.
16. Some thought that religious symbols were important and sacred and needed to be respected. Others thought that they were not important.
17. While some people could understand the significance of other people's religious symbols, others could not.
18. There was general agreement that all religions shared some common values. These could be emphasised to advance dialogue and religious tolerance.
19. Some discussants thought that a common religious symbol would be good to promote national unity and reconciliation. However, there was also fear that it could also undermine individual religious identities and distinctiveness.
20. Most discussants felt that religious conflict, was directly linked to people's attitudes and was not derived from the nature of religion itself.
21. A number of suggestions were put forward with regards to addressing religious differences and bridging the religious divide. These were: interfaith; inter-marriage; learning each other's language; education on religious understanding at all levels of school; emphasis on similarities; respect for others; understanding differences; understanding the common basics of religion; dialogue; fellowship; religious integration and leaders working together.
22. There was a general consensus that cultural and religious barriers had to be overcome to achieve national unity. For this to eventuate, it was suggested that we need to look inside ourselves to see our own weaknesses. Some cultural practices and ideas, which inhibited dialogue, need to be addressed.

23. There were sentiments expressed about some positive aspects of Indigenous Fijian relationship with other ethnic groups. For instance, it was said that Indigenous Fijians were always reaching out to others. The use of English as the common medium opened up doors to more interactions. Many proudly said that they celebrated each other's cultural/religious ceremonies.
24. It was generally felt that harmonious multi-cultural society was possible provided there was respect for each other's cultures and religions and provided we learnt from the consequences of conflict in other plural societies. However, difficulties such as irreconcilable differences and self-interests were also acknowledged.
25. The responses showed a mixture of pessimism and optimism regarding the creation of a harmonious multi-cultural society. Some said that it was possible while some said that it was not possible given the extent of cultural differences. There was a view that harmony was relative and the term should be realistically defined.
26. Some discussants believed that ethnic differences themselves did not cause conflict but other factors did. These included religious differences, self-interest, greed for power, personal propaganda of politicians, use of ethnic differences to influence people and bad leadership. However, there was still a view among some that ethnic differences themselves did cause conflict.
27. Suggestions for compromise with other cultures included joint business affiliation between ethnic groups; adoption of the cultural practices of others; compulsory learning of each other's language; inter-marriage and integration at different levels of society.
28. There was a general consensus that a cultural symbol for the whole of Fiji was imperative as a way of common identification. Some suggestions put forward were: people holding hands; a coconut; a collage of pictures of all religious symbols together; a white dove; the ocean; a golden *tabua* and a tree.
29. There was a general belief that democracy was still prevalent and if people compromised and worked together there was hope for a united future. This generation was ready for peace and harmony. The young generation would be the main hope for the future if the current generation was truly committed to peace building.



## Part 6

### 6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 6.1 Concluding Remarks

The research has presented two important aspects of peace building. Firstly, through the PPA method, individuals were able to collectively discuss their inner feelings and thoughts and build up community confidence and empowerment. Secondly, the consensus reached in their discussions discussed in Chapter 4 gives us an insight into the thinking of people in relation to other communities. Understanding these perceptions provides us with knowledge of some of the underlying sources of conflict and tension, and also some of the potential for peace building. This is so because despite some of the negative perceptions, there are also very positive and constructive views, which need to be nurtured and allowed to grow.

What is important is to look closely at the areas of "convergence" and build on them, to create a larger space for mutual engagement. This would greatly facilitate the process of inter-ethnic dialogue in Fiji. Areas of differences must be cautiously and sensitively approached. In situations of political crisis, people normally hold intense sentiments about their culture and religion and any attempt to alter their feelings could be repudiated with unforeseen intensity. What is required is to find out whether these intense sentiments are in fact "surface" in nature or deeper.

Some of the sentiments expressed in the responses by participants were based on spur of the moment opinions while some reflected deeper reflections. The former is easy to change while the latter might be more difficult though not impossible to change. People perceive that social processes and social institutions need to change. There is a dialectical process of interaction and synergy between individuals as agency and structures. One changes the other in a complex process of constant interaction. Change in a person's perception has an immense potential in social transformation at the broader level.

While institutional rehabilitation in the form of state policy implementation, constitutional reforms and legal discourse are important, in many ways they do not really address deeper perceptions and feelings of people. In times of political crisis, people's sentiments and prejudices can come into play either spontaneously or through orchestrated political mobilisation and could undermine state institutions, inter-communal harmony and social order and stability. We have experienced this time and time again. We must actively engage in looking for solutions beyond the institutional confinements as we have always done in the past, and look deeper into people's minds and hearts. This is where a lot of the problems are rooted and where a lot of the solutions can be found.

#### 6.2 Recommendations

This research is intended to be purely exploratory, to identify a pattern and framework as basis for further research. On the basis of this, two major recommendations are put forward.

1. That the findings be discussed further in various public forums and workshops organised by ECREA to ensure that researchers and peace builders become familiar with the peoples consensus. Different views need to be understood and respected no matter how conflicting they may be. This would be a good launching pad for further attempts at inter-cultural dialogue and peace building.

Because of the lack of sociological data on people's perceptions, it is recommended that further research on the subject be undertaken nation-wide to gauge and record people's perceptions of each other. Peace building needs to be informed by professional research to gauge what people are actually thinking about. The research methodology and questions need to be further fine-tuned and facilitators trained much more professionally to meet the demanding task. A national network of peace research must be set up to help facilitate the process.

2. On the basis of the national research findings, a major peace-building manual for Fiji be written and translated into the three major languages. This manual should include, amongst other things, the various types of ethnic perceptions, types of conflict in existence and affirmative strategies for peace building.
3. That a Peace Institute, along the lines of that recommended by the ECREA workshop "Towards a Culture of Peace" (1-5 October 2001) be set up to engage professional researchers to continue to carry out peace research in particular areas of peace building. The Peace Institute should link up with existing institutions such as the University of the South Pacific (USP) as a way of mobilising intellectual resources to be channelled towards peace studies.
- 4) A national data bank on peace research should be created to collect important findings on research such as this study together with the records of seminars and workshops, publications etc. The data bank should be jointly managed by USP, ECREA and the proposed Peace Institute.



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# Appendix 1

## Questionnaire for Peace Research

### Guiding Questions for Participatory Peace Appraisal

#### Part 1.0 Respondents Social Profile

##### 1.1 Ethnicity (Fill in the relevant ethnic groups in the grids)

Ethnicity			
Total			

##### 1.2 Religion (Fill in the relevant ethnic groups in the grids)

Religion						
Total						

##### 1.3 Age Group

Age Group	-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-
Total						

##### 1.4 Gender

Gender	Male	Female
Total		

#### Part 2.0 Background to Ethnic Interaction

##### 2.1 Do you live close to other ethnic groups?

Response	Yes	No
Total		

##### 2.2 Do you work with other ethnic groups?

Response	Yes	No
Total		

##### 2.3 Do you socialise frequently with other ethnic groups?

Response	Yes	No
Total		



2.4 What is the nature of your relationship with other ethnic groups?

Response	Good	Sometimes Good	Not Good
Total			

## Part 3.0: Inter-Ethnic/Cultural Perception

### Participatory Matrix Analysis for Collective Responses

3.1 What does the term culture mean to you?

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

3.2 What are some aspects of your culture, which you consider very important to you?

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

- 3.3 What roles do cultural symbols play in creating your cultural identity? Identify some of these. The translation for this question is a bit tricky, so you need to be very careful.

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

- 3.4 Identify some cultural symbols of various ethnic groups you are familiar with (List down and note the significance of the symbols as they are mentioned).

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations



- 3.5 Do you consider your culture more superior than those of other ethnic groups? If the response is "Yes", note down the reasons and some "superior" aspects mentioned by respondents in Matrix A. If the response is "No", note down the reasons in Matrix B.

Matrix A

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

Matrix B

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

- 3.6 Do you consider your culture inferior to those of other ethnic groups? If the response is "Yes", ask and note down the reasons in Matrix A. Also note down some "inferior" aspects of culture mentioned by respondents in Matrix A. If the response is "No", note down the reasons in Matrix B.

Matrix A

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

Matrix B

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations



3.7 What are some limitations and strengths of your own culture?

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

3.8 What are some limitations and strengths of other cultures in Fiji?

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

## 3.9 How do you think other communities perceive your culture?

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

- 3.10 Do you think that your culture can adopt aspects of other cultures? If the response is “Yes”, ask and note down the reasons in Matrix A. If the response is “No”, ask and note down the reasons in Matrix B.

Matrix A

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

Matrix B

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations



## Part 4.0: Religious Perception

4.1 How important is religion to you?

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

4.2 In what ways are your religion and your cultural identity linked?

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

- 4.3 Do you view religious teachings as unquestionable or can they be changed to suit the changing times? If the response is "Yes", find out the reasons and fill in the Matrix A. If the response is "No" (i.e. it can be changed), find out the reasons and fill in Matrix B.

Matrix A

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

Matrix B

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations



## 4.4 How can your religion accommodate the views of other religions?

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

## 4.5 How important are religious symbols to you?

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

- 4.6 What do you think of the symbols of other religions? You need to show them the symbols provided and allow them to respond to them.

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

- 4.7 What are some common values between your religion and other religions in Fiji?

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations



- 4.8 Is it necessary to use a common religious symbol for all religions in Fiji? If the response is “Yes”, find out the reasons and fill in Matrix A. If the response is “No”, find out the reasons and fill in Matrix B.

Matrix A

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

Matrix B

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

## 4.9 In what ways are religious differences a problem in Fiji?

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

## 4.10 What can be done to improve inter-religious understanding?

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations



## 5.0 National Consciousness and Common Identity

- 5.1 Do you think there are aspects of your culture and religion, which create barriers to your relationship with other ethnic groups? If the response is "Yes", note down the reasons in Matrix A. If the response is "No" (in other words, it is not a barrier), note down the reasons in Matrix B.

Matrix A

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

Matrix B

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

- 5.2 Do you think that the idea of a harmonious multi-cultural society for Fiji will permanently work? If the response is "Yes" note down reasons in Matrix A. If the response is "No" note down the reasons in Matrix B.

Matrix A

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

Matrix B

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations



- 5.3 Do you think ethnic differences are the main causes of political conflict as some people say or are there other reasons? If the response is "Yes" note down reasons in Matrix A. If the response is "No" note down the reasons in Matrix B.

Matrix A

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

Matrix B

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

- 5.4 How can you make compromises with other cultures to achieve cultural understanding as basis for a permanent multi-cultural and harmonious society in Fiji?

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

- 5.5 What would be an appropriate common cultural symbol for a united Fiji?

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations



- 5.6 Do you really see any bright future for Fiji? If the response is "Yes" note down reasons in Matrix A. If the response is "No" note down the reasons in Matrix B.

Matrix A

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

Matrix B

Main Collective Response	Other Views	Significant Observations

# Appendix 2

## Instructions for Facilitators

Below are some of the important things that you need to remember in relation to the facilitating process. Other details will be discussed in the facilitators training session.

- Groups which you engage must range from 5 to 15. Make sure that it is not too big otherwise it will be difficult to handle, given the limited time you have.
- You must sit in a circle and you should sit with them as part of the circle. Do not sit "at the top" or worse still, stand up. You have to create a "democratic", inclusive and empowering atmosphere. Neutralise, or at least minimize on any semblance of "authority", "expertise" or "outsideness" you may have. You are part of them.
- Your role is not to conduct, chair or direct the discussion. You are simply facilitating it. Avoid authoritarian, "inferior-versus superior" behaviour.
- You have to speak to them informally in a friendly tone, emphasising the significance of the project to national reconciliation in Fiji. Do not take too long to introduce. Make sure they understand what is happening before you start. Suspicion must be dispelled, and doubts must be addressed before you start. Introduce yourself clearly for a minute or so before introducing the topic.
- Ask the questions in the questionnaire without reading. Remember this is not an interview (in the normal sense of the word), where you mechanically extract information, but a discussion exercise. Repeat the questions if need be to ensure that they understand them. Keep the questions short and clear, especially if you are interpreting to Fijian or Hindi language.
- Allow the discussions to flow freely. If it diverts significantly, you need to "intervene" to get the discussion back on track. Intervention must be kept at a minimum.
- Once you see a general pattern emerging, note this down in the matrix. Also remember to fill in the other two columns.
- While listening and writing, you should be very observant. This is where your training on text analysis comes in. In particular, pay attention to: ethnic stereotypes; crystallised prejudices as opposed to temporary and opinionated prejudices; inclusivist as opposed to exclusivist cultural perception; and consensual views. This is important in terms of understanding ethnic hegemony.
- Sometimes you need to ask supplementary questions to enable respondents to get to the point. At the end, always ask whether everyone agrees with the final consensus. Where there is no consensus, note down the points of divergence in column two.
- Do not hesitate to use physical objects and illustrations in the discussion.
- Avoid domination of the discussion by one person. Everyone must have a chance to speak.
- Do not be over-serious, throw in some humour every now and then to keep the atmosphere "alight" all the time.
- For a group of 10 people, you need to spend about 45 minutes to 1 hour.

At the end, thank them for the discussion and assure them that their ideas will be put to good use.





